

# National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board

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## DRAFT MINUTES Executive Committee Conference Call

**Thursday, July 17, 2008, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST.**

**Executive Committee Members Present:** Martin Massengale, Chair; Martin Apple, Marianne Smith-Edge, Carol Keiser-Long, David Thomassen, Mary Wagner, Gale Buchanan, REE Undersecretary.

**Executive Committee Members Absent:** Daryl Lund, Edward Runge, Walter Armbruster

**NAREEE Board Staff:** Karen Hunter, Executive Director, Mrs. Shirley Morgan Jordan, Program Support Coordinator

**Guests:** Joe Dunn, Rob Hedberg



### I. Roll Call of Members and Invitees

Karen Hunter, Executive Director called roll of the Executive Committee members.

### II. Comments and Welcome

Martin Massengale welcomed everyone on the conference call. Dr. Massengale reinforced the changes in the recently passed Farm Bill, indicating the number of Board positions eliminated and reminding the group that after 9/30/08, the eliminated positions will not be refilled after the incumbent finishes serving his/her term. Dr. Massengale further stated that he and Dr. Armbruster would be meeting with Joe Dunn, Dr. Buchanan, Stan Johnson, and Jim Fischer next week regarding the new bioenergy committee. He indicated that there would be potential to add members to this new subcommittee after the Board nominations in the fall, rather than attempt to fill the whole subcommittee at the present time.

Regarding the November meeting, Dr. Massengale suggested a different format from recent years, in that the Board should try to answer the question: How can we be more efficient and effective in working with the Department than in the past? It was suggested that Board members identifying the highest research priorities in their respective fields might be an appropriate theme this year, instead of planning a major topic.

Dr. Buchanan welcomed the group and commented that in the time since the Farm Bill had passed, an implementation committee plus mission area groups had been formed to plan for adopting the changes passed in the Farm Bill. He indicated that Dr. Pierson had met the previous week with leaders from NASULGC to listen to their opinions and suggestions. Dr. Buchanan stated that the biggest impact from the Farm Bill will be all CSREES changing into the National Institute for Food and Agriculture. The creation of the Research Education and Economics Office (REEO) and the appointment of its accompanying division directors is going to take some time and planning.

Rob Hedberg provided some additional comments regarding the Farm Bill and implementation plans. An inventorying process is currently taking place, to identify exactly what is in the bill, where certain tasks should be delegated, etc. Six hundred provisions are involved, with about 125 having significant impact on the REE mission area. He pointed out that science will be integrated throughout the Department, which will include REE in other areas/programs. In working with the implementation plan, it is important to figure out which items must be done first. For example, the Specialty Crops Research Initiative RFA was posted to the CSREES website. The program has funding of approximately \$30 million, and the entire granting process must be complete in two months (prior to the end of the fiscal year). Another important part of the implementation plan is the development of a roadmap within 90 days of passing of the Farm Bill. The roadmap is more than a strategic plan, although it does have some prescribed elements, such as intramural vs. extramural research support. The Board can be helpful to the implementation process as a conduit for seeking input from constituents. An example of this input-gathering is the new NAREEE bioenergy subcommittee. The bioenergy subcommittee must be appointed within 90 days of enactment of the Farm Bill (September 18, 2008), and within 180 days of committee appointment, the first report is due (March 18, 2009). He also commented that in regards to NIFA, people are being encouraged to refer to the new agency as the “National Institute” to designate prestige, rather than calling it “knee-fah” or just using the acronym.

### **III. Update on Committee Activities**

#### **Educating the Future Work Force for Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Areas Report**

Marianne reported that the executive summary for the report was near-completion. An outline for the report was emailed to Executive Committee members on July 17 for perusal. Marianne indicated that she would try and have a draft to Karen Hunter by the following Monday for review, based on input from the committee. The report will detail three recommended priorities

and include the executive summary and a conclusion. It will also emphasize the future research needed to address the identified priorities. Carol Keiser reiterated that instead of recommending changing the image of agriculture by branding, it might be more appropriate to refer to it as “re-branding” of agriculture, emphasizing that agriculture has always been around, but now it is even more critical to connect agriculture to current issues.

### **Relevancy and Adequacy of Funds Report**

Karen Hunter reported that the 2008 Relevancy and Adequacy of Funding report had been sent out to the Executive Committee for comments and revisions with a deadline of July 23. After she incorporates any comments, the draft report will go out for full Board review before completion and submission to the Secretary and to Congress.

### **Specialty Crop Committee Activities**

Walt Armbruster was absent, but Dr. Massengale reminded the executive committee of the two Specialty Crop Committee listening sessions to be held in Washington State on August 20 and 21, 2008, and the session to be held in New York State on September 4, 2008.

### **Peer Review Committee Activities**

Marty Apple reported that the Peer Review Committee has learned about the current peer review processes and outputs. The goal of peer review is a developed, informed process that results in impacts than can be used. Dr. Massengale stated that the Hill staff wanted to see objective research that was independently reviewed in-depth prior to the start of the project. In general, the quality of peer reviews was very high. Dr. Apple suggested that a clearly defined list of recommendations was necessary in order to obtain clear feedback. Dr. Massengale further stated that recommendations and reports should be short and specific in order to get appropriate feedback. More discussion is required at Board meetings. More preparation before Board meetings can help facilitate discussion and setting priorities. Recommendations to “do more research, more programming, etc.” with the same funding are not helpful to the agencies. Recommendations should point out the good aspects of the work, but also indicate that it is underfunded.

## **IV. Update on Farm Bill Implementation**

See earlier notes in “Welcome” section provided by Dr. Buchanan and Rob Hedberg.

## **V. Board Nominations**

The deadline for NAREEE Board nominations is August 25, 2008. If you would like to be reappointed, you must submit an AD-755 and all papers of support, just like the procedure completed during the initial appointment. The Federal Register notice for nominations has been published.

## **VI. Planning for the Fall Meeting**

The meeting will be November 12-14. The agenda topics will be discussed next week when Drs. Massengale and Armbruster are in Washington D.C. Work groups may need to be assigned to various topics for the meeting to set the program, etc.

## **VII. Other Issues**

Dr. Massengale brought up several issues to consider for speakers and topics. The question was raised whether to have 4-6 speakers? With 10-15 minutes each to talk about industry priorities? Should topics be broader or narrower? Should presentations be made regarding what is currently happening in other agencies? Dr. Massengale reminded the executive committee that the most important aspect of the Board is hearing what their colleagues, other board members, and industries they represent consider being of the highest priority. The USDA staff role should be to listen and respond. The Board's role should be to define what is most important and how to address priorities.

Marianne Smith Edge suggested preparing speakers with a bulleted outline, for a more precise, guided presentation, and to keep presenters on track with fewer tangents. This would also facilitate the report-writing process.

Dr. Buchanan re-emphasized that what the Department really needs to know is what the industry thinks are the highest priority projects, rather than what the Department thinks they are. He pointed out that the Board should make it known to agencies what the industry needs and priorities are, so that the Department and agencies can respond back to the Board regarding how they (the agencies) are addressing or considering those industry needs.

***The next Executive Committee Conference Call will be August 14, 2008 at 11:00 a.m., Eastern Standard Time.***

The meeting adjourned at 12:15p.m.

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MARTIN MASSENGALE  
Chair

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Karen Hunter  
Executive Director

APPROVAL BY ADVISORY BOARD: \_\_\_\_\_

Date

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Chair

Executive Director